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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000237

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SUBJECT: PKK Issue: Update on Violence and Political Developments
(December 16-31, 2006)

REF: 06 ANKARA 6590 and previous

(U) Sensitive but unclassified - please protect accordingly.

1. (SBU) This is another in a series of periodic reports on PKK violence in Turkey. Our primary sources for these reports are mainstream Turkish press services, such as the Anatolian News Agency, and international wire services. While these are more reliable than most Turkish press sources, they are not necessarily unimpeachable. Another source is the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff (TGS) website which documents contacts/clashes with the PKK. Press services sympathetic to the PKK, such as Neu-Isenburg People's Defense Forces and Firat News Agency, tend to report higher numbers of the Turkish Security Forces casualties and are often otherwise unreliable.

2. (U) During the December 16-31 period, there were no reports of casualties due to PKK violence. A total of 16 PKK members were arrested in Hakkari, Agri, Batman, Konya, Sirnak, Malatya, Sanliurfa and Tunceli provinces, and onePKKer surrendered in Hakkari. A total of four PKK members were handed over by the KDP and PUK to Turkish authorities at the Iraq-Turkey border. Security forces detonated or seized AK-47s, cartridges, A-4, ammunition, foodstuffs, and other goods found at different locations.

3. (U) Following are political comments by Turkish and Kurdish officials:

-- TURKISH OFFICIALS:

- Special Envoy Edip Baser said in Sivas on December 20, that Turkey was capable of launching a cross-border operation if the Turkish state deems necessary. He noted, "If my state sees it appropriate to make a decision to launch a cross-border operation, it makes that decision as an independent state and its armed forces execute that decision without any difficulty. No one should have any doubts about that." Speaking to a local television station in the central Anatolian town of Sivas, Baser underlined Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin were also a part of the Turkish state. "The most fertile land for terrorism and fundamentalism to grow is ignorance," he said. "That's why we have to get rid of ignorance."

-- FM Gul said in a TV interview on Dec. 29 that if necessary, Turkey would carry out a cross-border operation to deal with the PKK's presence in northern Iraq. Gul added that Turkey did not seek to interfere in the domestic affairs of any other country, but that if Iraq served as a base for a terrorist organization carrying

out attacks in Turkey, then Turkey could avail itself of its international rights.

-- KURDISH VIEWS:

- The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) "Peace March" ended in Ankara on December 18. DTPers protested Speaker of Parliament Arinc for refusing to receive them. DTPers chanted slogans in Turkish and Kurdish such as, "Long Live the Brotherhood of People," "We do not want to die or kill," and "Mutual Ceasefire." The march began in Diyarbakir on March 16 with slogans such as "Long Live Apo [Ocalan]."

- During a ceremony in Diyarbakir on December 23, DTP Chairman Turk criticized PM Erdogan, who recently backed off from comments he made in 2005 admitting there is a "Kurdish problem" in Turkey. Erdogan reportedly said, "My wife is from Siirt [in the southeast]. She is an Arab. I love my wife and there is no Kurdish issue in my country."

- "Hurriyet" on December 27, quoted DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk as saying that if the Republic of Turkey preferred to resolve the Kurdish issue through peaceful means his party would appeal to the PKK either to sweep the mines that it laid or to tell the GOT where it planted the mines. He stressed that if the state took a positive first step, the DTP would have a stronger influence over the PKK. He added that otherwise their efforts won't bear a fruit. Turk could not confirm whether or not the PKK had a map of the mines that it laid.

- December 22 dailies wrote that 100 academics and 320 intellectuals issued a joint declaration and appealed for a "civilian solution" to

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the Kurdish issue. Among those who signed the declaration were Orhan Dogan, Prof. Dogu Ergil, Sezgin Tanrikulu and Ayhan Bilgen.

14. (U) Following are selected columns and articles on the topic:

- Hasan Cemal in the December 26 "Milliyet" questioned whether Turkey's policy of ignoring Iraqi President Talabani was a good idea. Cemal favored good relations between Turkey and Iraq Kurds. In return, he asked the Iraqi Kurds not to ignore some of Turkey's sensitivities such as the PKK, the Kirkuk issue and an independent Kurdistan.

- Murat Yetkin in the December 26 "Radikal" wrote that Kurdish votes in the Southeast, and even in Diyarbakir, might this time favor a conservative party rather than the DTP. On the Kurdish issue, Yetkin listed some critical aspects:

11. The U.S. has realized that it won't be able to pull itself from the Iraq quagmire unless Sunnis and Shias reached an agreement.

12. Since Barzani was concerned about the possibility of the postponement of the referendum scheduled for the end of 2007 on the status of Kirkuk, he started to make mistakes that caused increased hostility among Arabs toward Kurds.

13. The U.S. for its prestige in Iraq, needed Iran's cooperation. Iran, like Turkey, opposed Barzani on the Kirkuk and independent Kurdistan issues.

14. Due to corruption in the Kurdish region, locals in that area have been inclined toward more religious/conservative movements.

15. The KDP's priority has been protecting its own existence. Meanwhile Turkey has started to talk to the U.S. about the conditions under which it might be able to carry out a cross border operation.

- Mehmet Ali Birand in the December 28 "Posta" asked, "The DTP must make a decision: Would it remain as the tail of the PKK or assume its own identity?" He referred to interesting signals that the public in the Southeast has been giving both to the PKK and to the DTP. Birand wrote, "Whether you call it the Kurdish or the

Southeast issue, the public wants to relax. They do not want their kids to die in a struggle with an unclear aim."

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